market cattle testing

FOR BRUCELLOSIS AND TUBERCULOSIS

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HOW PROGRAM WORKS

The program consists of six basic steps:

- Female cattle 2 years of age and over and breeding bulls that are to be marketed are identified with a special backtag at ranches, farms, livestock markets or other assembly points on the way to market.
- Blood samples are collected from tagged animals at slaughtering plants or other designated points.
- Blood samples are then forwarded to a federal laboratory where they are tested for brucellosis.
- Postmortem inspection for tuberculosis is conducted at slaughtering plants under federal inspection.
- Test results are forwarded to federal disease control officials in the province where the cattle originated.
- Negative tests are credited to herds and areas of origin. When a blood test or postmortem inspection indicates infection is present in a herd, Canada Department of Agriculture veterinarians work directly with the owner until the disease is eradicated.

WHO MAY PARTICIPATE?

Any cattleman in a county or other certified or accredited area where the Market Cattle Testing Program is in operation may participate. You can obtain information on the program from your nearest Health of Animals Branch Office.

WHAT CATTLE ARE TESTED UNDER THIS PLAN?

Only female cattle 2 years old and older and breeding bulls are backtagged and tested.

COUNTY CAN BE RECERTIFIED OR ACCREDITED ON BASIS OF MARKET CATTLE TESTING RESULTS

A brucellosis area can be recertified under the plan, provided a sufficient number of cattle have been backtagged and tested. Similarly, a tuberculosis area can be accredited for a period of 6 years under this plan.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE BACK TAGS?

Backtags identify the herd, province, and area or county of origin of animals shipped to market.

TAGGING IS SIMPLE

Tags are applied to either side of an animal, just back of the shoulder and about 4 inches below the back line.

The method of applying tags varies. In some areas farmers or ranchers apply the tags just before the animals are shipped to market. In other areas the tags are not applied until the animals arrive at a livestock market or assembly point.

WHERE TAGS CAN BE OBTAINED

If, in your area, tagging is done at farms and ranches, you can obtain tags and information about their application from your nearest Health of Animals Branch Office.

TAGGED ANIMALS MAY BE SHIPPED TO ANY MARKET YOU CHOOSE

All federally inspected slaughtering plants — and some others – are cooperating in the Market Cattle Testing Program.

WILL ALL TAGGED ANIMALS SHIPPED TO MARKET BE BLOOD TESTED?

All tagged animals shipped to cooperating markets and slaughtering plants will be tested and negative results credited to your herd.

WHO COLLECTS THE BLOOD SAMPLES?

Blood samples will be collected by federal meat inspection personnel when animals are sent to federally inspected slaughtering plants. In other participating plants, specially trained personnel will obtain the samples.

WHO CONDUCTS THE POSTMORTEM INSPECTION FOR TUBERCULOSIS?

Postmortem inspection is conducted by federal or provincial meat inspection personnel at slaughtering plants.

HOW REACTORS ARE TRACED

A record is kept of the code numbers on the tags you use for your herd. Since these numbers are not issued to any other owner, animals bearing one of your numbers can easily be traced to your herd, province, and county or area.

WHAT HAPPENS IF BRUCELLOSIS REACTORS ARE FOUND AMONG THE COWS I SHIP TO MARKET?

Federal Health of Animals veterinarians will visit and discuss test results with you and arrange for a test of your herd.

IF TUBERCULOSIS IS FOUND IN THE CATTLE I SHIP FOR SLAUGHTER, WILL MY ENTIRE HERD BE TESTED?

Yes. If no reactors are uncovered on a retest of the herd, it will be classed as non-infected.

DOES PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAM ELIMINATE TESTING ANIMALS ON RANCH AND FARM?

Yes.

There are only three exceptions:

1. If either tuberculosis- or brucellosis- infected cattle are traced to your herd, then it will be necessary to test your cattle.

2. To recertify your area for brucellosis, if you have failed to market and backtag the required number of breeding cattle during the prescribed period, or do not have sufficient coverage under the Brucellosis Milk Ring Testing Program.

3. To accredit your area for tuberculosis, if you have failed to market and backtag the required number of breeding cattle during the prescribed period.

Only if either 1, 2 or 3 is the case, will your herd have to be tested.

MARKET CATTLE TESTING REDUCES ON-THE-FARM AND RANCH TESTING REQUIRED FOR RECERTIFICATION

Actual field trials show that in beef-producing areas, on-the-ranch blood testing is required in only about ten herds in a hundred. In other words, market cattle testing eliminates 90% of on-the-farm and ranch testing required in other methods of recertification.

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MARKET CATTLE TESTING SAVES TIME AND MONEY

Ranchers and farmers participating in the Market Cattle Testing Program

- save time and money,
- help maintain their area's certified and accredited status,
- play an important role in eradicating brucellosis and tuberculosis in Canada.

Market Cattle Testing, by screening tagged market cattle at slaughtering plants, reduces the need for collecting blood samples or doing tuberculin testing at farms or ranches.

The program, which was originally designed to meet the needs of cattlemen in range and semirange areas, is now proving to be a valuable brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication method in nonrange areas. Test results are credited back to herd and county of origin, and can be used for recertification or accreditation of areas.

You stand to gain by taking part in this program. By backtagging your market cattle, you can find out quickly if your herd is brucellosis-free and also tuberculosis-free. This method of screening your cattle can keep you constantly reassured that infection has not been introduced into your herd. If infection is present, it can be located easily and be eliminated quickly, before it has a chance to spread.

By participating in the Market Cattle Testing Program you can help your county or area without additional on-the-farm or ranch tests except in known infected herds. This will save you time and money, help to maintain your area's certified or accredited status, and contribute to the eradication of brucellosis and tuberculosis.

Prepared by the Information Division for the Health of Animals Branch

REGIONAL VETERINARIAN BRANCH OFFICES

Health of Animals Branch

British Columbia
Room 801
1001 West Pender Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6E 2M7

Alberta
604 Public Building
205 - 8th Avenue S.E.
Calgary, Alberta T2G 0K9

Saskatchewan
828 Motherwell Building
1901 Victoria Avenue
Regina, Sask. S4P 3R4

Manitoba
613 Federal Building
269 Main Street
Winnipeg, Man. R3C 1B2

Ontario
909 Jane Street
Toronto, Ont.
Mail: P.O. Box 334, Weston, Ont. M9N 3M7

Quebec
Room 312
1441 St. Urbain Street
Montreal, Quebec H2X 2M9

Atlantic Provinces
Terminal Plaza Bldg., 5th floor
1222 Main Street
Moncton, N.B.
Mail: P.O. Box 338, Moncton, N.B. E1C 8L4

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INFORMATION DIVISION
CANADA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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